

FSMA Produce Safety Rule FAQs: On-Farm Readiness Reviews (OFRRs)

On-Farm Readiness Reviews are FREE, non-regulatory farm visits where we walk around the farm and take stock of your farm's food safety status together. They are educational in nature, and a great chance to ask Produce Safety Rule questions and troubleshoot any tricky challenges in a real world environment. We answer some Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) below.

1. WHAT IS AN ON-FARM READINESS REVIEW?

- On-Farm Readiness Reviews are non-regulatory walk-around of your farm where we can answer questions about food safety and the Produce Safety Rule, talk about any challenging areas, and brainstorm solutions together.

2. WHAT DO ON-FARM READINESS REVIEWS COST?

- Nothing! On-Farm Readiness Reviews are completely free of cost.

3. WHO WOULD BE COMING TO MY FARM?

- On-Farm Readiness Reviews are done with someone from the Department of Agriculture's FSMA team and someone from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. We can also invite someone from the FDA if you are interested in having their knowledge at the table, but that's totally up to you.

4. CAN I HAVE AN ON-FARM READINESS REVIEW EVEN IF I'M EXEMPT OR NOT COVERED?

- Yes! They are available to produce farms of all sizes. It doesn't matter if you are fully covered, not covered, or qualified exempt. Maine has a lot of small farms that are growing and exploring new market channels. Many of our farms may be Qualified Exempt now but can grow out of that exemption into needing to comply with the full requirements of the **Produce Safety Rule**. The On-Farm Readiness Reviews are a great opportunity to learn more about food safety on your farm and prepare for any direction your business takes you.

5. WILL I GET IN REGULATORY TROUBLE IF YOU SEE ISSUES ON MY FARM?

- On-Farm Readiness Reviews are designed to be educational opportunities. We're not there to judge; we're there to help explain the Produce Safety Rule in person and talk through how it applies to your actual farm together. We don't take any regulatory action unless we see an **egregious condition** while we're there.

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6. WHAT'S AN EGREGIOUS CONDITION?

- An egregious condition is a situation where we have a **source of contamination**, a **route of contamination** from the source to the product, and **contaminated product that's out in circulation or about to be in circulation**. This could be things like a chicken in your cooler pooping in your harvested string beans, washing greens with untreated beaver pond water, or people harvesting strawberries where a portapotty tipped over and ran into the field.
- If there are conditions or conduct that make it very likely that product is going to continue being contaminated and shipped to consumers if it's not addressed (or product that is already contaminated and getting to customers) then we have an egregious condition.

7. SO WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU SEE AN EGREGIOUS CONDITION ON MY FARM WHILE YOU'RE THERE?

- We would ask you to take corrective action to address it. If we observed an egregious condition where contaminated product was already out to the public or about to be, we would be required to notify the FDA which would trigger compliance action.

8. YIKES. DOES THIS HAPPEN MUCH?

- Nope. We haven't come across an egregious condition with that level of immanent public health risk at all yet. Most of the time we'll talk with you about anything we're concerned about and listen to how you're already managing those risks. If something makes us uncomfortable as food safety professionals, we'll be straight with you and discuss it or ask you to address it. Again, we haven't run into any egregious conditions yet during OFRRs.

9. WHO HEARS ABOUT WHAT HAPPENS ON MY ON-FARM READINESS REVIEW?

- Only you. The On-Farm Readiness Review program is a nation-wide program that was designed to protect farmer confidentiality while providing educational opportunities. It's structured so that none of your information is shared beyond your conversations on the farm. We don't talk about your OFRR with other farms, ag service providers, or other regulators.
- We leave any notes we may have taken with you when we leave the farm. Nothing comes back to the office with us. We are required to maintain farmer confidentiality by the FDA, but we are very mindful of how connected Maine can be and we're very careful about protecting your privacy.

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- We also make sure that whichever inspector does your On-Farm Readiness Review is not the inspector who does your FSMA inspection if you're fully covered. We do that so the inspector doing your farm inspection is coming with fresh eyes and an open mind, and so you can feel free asking questions and problem solving with your inspector during the On-Farm Readiness Review.

10. GREAT! THAT SOUNDS LIKE SOMETHING I'D BE INTERESTED IN. HOW DO I GET AN ON-READINESS REVIEW FOR MY FARM?

- Just give us a holler. We'll get in touch with you to figure out a time that works for everyone and we'll take it from there!

Request an OFRR by calling or emailing:

Leah Cook

Food Inspection Supervisor

Phone: (207) 764-2100

Email: leah.cook@maine.gov